

Midnight Shakes the Memory

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/1611047) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/1611047>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham , Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Smut , Non-Consensual Drug Use , Bottom Hannibal , Top Will , Anal Sex , Oral Sex , First Time , Vulnerable Hannibal , mischa feels , Hurt/Comfort , Angst with a Happy Ending , Childhood Trauma , Psychological Trauma , Protective Will Graham , Bathing/Washing , Kidnapping , Psychological Torture , Starvation , Torture , Canon-Typical Violence , Someone Help Hannibal Lecter , Nonconsensual Cannibalism , origin story feels , Cuddling & Snuggling , Hand Feeding , Other Additional Tags to Be Added , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Fix-It , Episode: s02e13 Mizumono , Minor Character Death , not will or hanners , Dark Will Graham
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2014-05-13 Updated: 2021-03-21 Words: 11,950 Chapters: 11/?

Midnight Shakes the Memory

by [foxontherun](#)

Summary

An old patient and colleague of Hannibal's escapes from the Baltimore State Hospital of the Criminally Insane and decides to re-introduce Hannibal to his humanity. Cue Hannibal having a drug-induced breakdown and needing Will to help bring him back from the edge.

Notes

The world needs more Bottom!Hanni and I need more hurt/comfort in my life.

Chapter 1

Hannibal got the phone call while on his way back to his car from a shopping trip. Laden down with bags containing jamon serrano, guava paste, organic artichokes, lardo, and several other ingredients for his dinner, he shifted the bags to one hand and pulled out his phone with the other, realizing there was no graceful way for him to unlock the car while juggling so many packages at once. Instead, he stood patiently in the cold, with the phone to his ear, and listened while Jack Crawford explained to him, sounding unusually harried, that Doctor Sheldon DuVall had somehow managed to escape from custody while being transferred upstate to a new psychiatric hospital.

"How unfortunate," Hannibal frowned. "Sheldon is a dangerous man to be out in the general public."

Jack sighed. "Well you would know that as well as anyone," he said. "Your testimony helped get him a life sentence."

"Mine along with many others," Hannibal noted. "He had devolved into complete psychosis by the time he was captured. No longer the friend and colleague many of us had known."

"I'm calling as a general warning," Jack said, "Sheldon might consider you a target. You were instrumental in his capture and imprisonment, as well as being his psychiatrist."

"It has been many years since I last visited and spoke with him," Hannibal replied, and then, "he expressed strong feelings of betrayal," he mused. "But he was deep into a paranoid episode. His treatment may have progressed since then. I have not followed his case for some time."

"Well," Jack said, "If you'd like a police escort we can arrange one for you. It's your call."

"I believe there is minimal danger," Hannibal replied. "Though I thank you for your concern."

"Just keep an eye out," Jack said gruffly. "We've thrown a lot of manpower into catching him, but be alert. He's an intelligent, resourceful psychopath."

"I know the type," Hannibal said, and hung up the phone.

It was a little inconvenient for Hannibal to have to factor this new threat into his plans. Of course, DuVall may have forgotten him entirely, but that was more than unlikely. Hannibal was not a forgettable man, much less a forgettable therapist. Sheldon had been a mildly intriguing case, though nothing earth shattering. He wasn't the first doctor to wholly embrace the God complex - stimulated by constantly holding sway over life and death - to the point of mania, but he went after it with singular determination, killings that were macabre paeans to

the transformative nature of healing. Grim tableaux where the healer doubled as his own patient, leaving more and more of himself at each scene. When Sheldon was arrested he was missing three fingers, his left eye, both ears, and both testicles, raving about the ongoing infinite coil of mortality. Hannibal had watched him deteriorate with a vague curiosity born of academic regard, pushing his buttons when he felt like it would provoke the most effective response. Sheldon gifted him one of his own ears, and, with a knowing glance, suggested he add it to his dinner menu. This was when Hannibal had phoned the FBI. Sheldon may have been mad, but he was also a gifted, insightful man with many years of experience as a doctor and psychiatrist. He knew too much.

This was not an opportune moment for Hannibal. His intricate plans for Will were yielding results beyond his wildest desires. He wanted to bask in the sheer satisfaction of seeing his masterpiece, the wholly unique and incomparably beautiful creature that Will Graham had become. He wanted to revel in it, bask in it - the only man on earth he could truly consider not only his equal, but in some areas his superior. They were perfectly matched and balanced. Will was a being both sublime and dangerous - a combination that left Hannibal breathless from awe. He was falling close to infatuation, but he found he couldn't take a step back. He'd always been impulsive, prone to indulge in the sensual. He wanted to consume Will Graham. To possess him in every possible way. To mingle with him in the shared bliss of their becoming. He didn't have time for Sheldon DuVall and his petty revenge.

Unfortunately for Hannibal, DuVall had more than enough time and motivation in the intervening years to think of nothing but revenge. Hannibal had been his soulmate. The only man who had truly grasped the righteous divinity of his plan. He had loved Hannibal with all the grace that God holds for His most venerated instruments. When Hannibal had taken that love and warped it - turned it into something shrieking and ugly and inhuman, DuVall cast him into the pit. Hannibal wasn't a man, Sheldon knew. His humanity had left him like a wisp of body heat. Now, he was a fallen angel, defiled and unworthy of God's light or his mercy.

His plan was clear to him, shining gold with purifying flame. He would cast down the devil and draw its sting. Reunite the shell of his body with his human soul. Hannibal would ultimately thank him for it. On his knees, as a supplicant would. Because he would realize that no one had the power to create humanity but God. And Sheldon would let him rejoice in humility at the great gift he had been given, before DuVall killed him.

Chapter 2

Hannibal returns to consciousness, and makes a series of rapid-fire deductions, neurons crackling like distant gunfire. It is cold in the basement where he's being held, and he has to hold himself very still to keep from shivering. He doesn't want to give his former patient the satisfaction. He feels a momentary itch of self recrimination for allowing his capture so easily. Not that he's worried - DuVall isn't nearly intelligent enough or powerful enough to pose any kind of a threat, but his captivity, in this delicate moment in time, is an inconvenience. He suspects Will is going to use this experience to manipulate him, to put him at a disadvantage - it's what Hannibal himself would do, of course - but he hasn't prepared for this contingency in the complex reticulation of his plans. He wonders briefly how long it will be until someone finds his upturned grocery bags beside his abandoned Bentley, and weighs the probabilities. He judges Will Graham will take two days to figure out where Hannibal is being kept. DuVall, despite his appalling lack of originality and his lazy self-indulgence, has a blunt kind of cleverness, though even in wit he is hopelessly unmatched against Will. He is *nothing* compared to Will. Hannibal will be found, sooner rather than later, and hopefully before any lasting damage can be done to his physical state. He doesn't think DuVall intends his death, but the man is a dangerous sadist, psychotic, and not entirely invested in keeping Hannibal alive, either. How utterly pointless if Hannibal were to die as the result of some accident or neglect. That is not how he intends to leave this world.

He is in some kind of basement or root cellar, windowless, with air that manages to be both stifling and freezing at once. He closes his eyes for a moment, testing the strength of the zip-ties that bind his hands and feet. They hold, tied so tightly that Hannibal has already lost feeling in his hands. He will not escape bound in this way, that much is certain, so he must be alert for the first advantage that presents itself. He weighs the pros and cons of allowing Will Graham to save him. He has no doubt he could talk himself out of the situation he's found himself in, it wouldn't be the first or worst Faustian bargain, but perhaps allowing Will to believe he has the upper hand possesses some value. Hannibal is still pondering this when he hears the clunk of a lock being disengaged.

Duvall looks something like a mall Santa, albeit with more intelligence in the crinkle of his eyes, and much, much less sanity. He has clearly used his time incarcerated to build up some muscle-mass. Hannibal is not a small man and he knows far too well the strength needed to carry dead weight. Duvall approaches him, hands tucked into his pockets, and favors him with a genial smile.

"Hello Sheldon," Lecter says, dipping his head in the closest approximation of a nod he can manage.

"Hannibal," Duvall murmurs, drawing closer. The whites of his eyes look yellowish in the dim light of the basement. He kneels before Hannibal, a safe distance away. "It's good to see you, my old friend."

He doesn't sneer around the word 'friend,' sounding genuinely happy to have Hannibal with him. Hannibal supposes he must *be* happy. In some way that involves a complete break from reality.

"And you," Hannibal replies, not to be outdone in this parody of good manners that's playing out.

Duvall sighs and rocks back onto his heels, his eyes flitting skittishly around the room, though its empty save for Hannibal and a few cardboard boxes.

"I have a great gift for you, old friend," he says, his eyes returning to Hannibal's face and sweeping down the length of his trussed-up form.

"The last time I saw you, you weren't feeling so generously towards me," Hannibal notes, scanning Duvall's body language, his posture. Clearly the man has something planned - torture of some kind, retribution for his long stay at the Baltimore Hospital for the criminally insane.

"Ah, well, bygones and all that," Duvall chirps, grinning and standing up to look down at Hannibal from a height.

"Why give me a gift?" Hannibal asks. "Why was it necessary to spirit me away like this? You could have disappeared. Started your work over someplace new."

"I always considered us to have unfinished business," Duval says, waving a dismissive hand. "Consider this a homecoming present."

Before Hannibal can react, Duvall reaches down and injects him with the syringe he's had stashed in his pocket. He depresses the plunger and gazes at Hannibal, breathless, smiling beatifically, grotesquely. He kneels back down before Hannibal once more.

"What was in that syringe, Sheldon?" Hannibal asks calmly, fixing the man with his eyes. He refuses to let himself be worried by this. Whatever it is, he can ride it out. Will will find him.

"Only you, Hannibal," Duvall says sweetly, heading for the door once more. "It's only you."

Hannibal feels his body dropping, falling, the sensation sudden and immediate. He fights to tamp down a groan of dread and vertigo, watching the shadows crawl up the walls, hatching into swarms of spiders. Branches, impossibly big, start to grow, steeping the room in shadow. Hannibal is a tiny presence in an immense, cold forest. He shakes his head. Snow begins to fall.

And Hannibal, young and afraid, begins to moan.

Chapter 3

Will is sitting in Hannibal's waiting room, frowning at his watch, which says 7:32, when he gets the call. Jack sounds tense - Will can hear it in his voice right off the bat.

"Will, we need you in on something," Jack says.

"Jack..." Will's voice trails off. "What is it, Jack?"

"It's Hannibal." Jack pauses, and Will feels a dip of fear in his stomach. Hannibal is two minutes late for their appointment. Meticulous man that he is, he always opens his office door at 7:30 on the dot.

"What's happened, Jack?" Will barks out, tension starting to chip away at his patience. There's a pause, and Jack sighs.

"We think he's been kidnapped," he states, almost reluctantly, and Will is distantly aware of standing up, of pacing to the door of Hannibal's office and trying the handle. It's locked. He lets out a breath, the fear that he's been nursing since this phonecall began spilling over into his conscious mind. His hands are clenched at his sides. He can't even bring himself to be disgusted by the wave of concern that crashes through him for Hannibal, for his friend. He grimaces. *Through the rabbit-hole now, Will my boy.* His father's voice echoes bizarrely in his head.

"Jack," he says carefully, "you need to tell me exactly what is going on."

Jack tells him that they found Hannibal's car abandoned in the parking lot near one of the cities many Sunday open-air markets. That there were no signs of a struggle except for two upturned grocery bags in the street, spilling their contents wetly on the ground, flies swarming in a shimmering blanket over the remains of a leg of lamb, a few duck breasts. Will can see it with astonishing clarity - the refurbished red brick of a row of artist's studios adjacent to a long flat block of asphalt. Hannibal's car door open, the leather warm and soft-smelling in the sun. A flash of orange persimmons, picked over by rats and insects. And a black void in the center of it all, where Hannibal should be. Jack gives him the address of the scene, and Will's keys are in the ignition before he punches his phone off and throws it, hard, into the back seat and just sits, chest heaving with the force of his breaths, trying to control himself, trying not to give in to the sick well of terror that he feels threatening to eat him up.

Standing next to Hannibal's Bentley, Jack stands with hat in hand, talking quietly with a CSU tech, until he spots Will, and motions him over.

"Nothing new," he says, to forestall Will's questions, and waves the tech off. "The man's name is Sheldon DuVall. Shares a similar profile to Hannibal, as it happens. Former thoracic surgeon, made the switch to psychiatry in '03. Convicted in '07 of multiple homicides. His MO was to dismember his victims and take body parts with him - leaving his own in their

place. He was caught fairly quickly, as you'd imagine." Jack shakes his head. "Hannibal Lecter was his psychiatrist. I wasn't involved with the case, but Hannibal's testimony helped ensure a life stay in the BSHCI instead of the death penalty. I guess he wasn't as thankful as he should have been." He hands Will a thick stack of files. "This is everything we have on him to-date, including Dr. Chilton's notes from his treatment during the last few years of his incarceration." Jack scans Will's face, not bothering to disguise how troubled he is by what he must find there. "Will, I need you to have your head on straight about this," he says. "Don't let your feelings about Hannibal Lecter get in the way of good sense." He turns to shepherd the rest of the CSU techs from the scene. "I don't want Hannibal to die at the hands of some psychopath," he shoots over his shoulder. "I want to deal with him myself."

Will ignores him, as he ignores the rest of the general buzzing of the techs leaving the scene, as he closes his eyes. He doesn't have as much experience reading a scene without a body, but there is enough memory lingering here, filtering through the sunlight and absorbed by the very air around him, that, after a beat, the pendulum swings, and he *sees*.

I've planned this moment for years. Through the haze of drugs that bastard Chilton insists on pumping through my bloodstream, through the bars of my cage, through the cage of my mind, I've planned, and I've waited. I've never been a very patient man, but for this...for this it's all going to be worth those days when my head is screaming for the need to show him, to teach him how cruelly Gods can repay their creations for their perfidy. I've been disciplined, shaping my body in the same way that he shaped my mind, honing my senses to be better, stronger, faster. I'll need it. I'm not fool enough to miss-value him. He's a predator, but I, I am more than that. I am the divine light. I am the cruelty and emptiness of the universe. I am the creator, and he will soon know the strength of my resolve. After I escape, I devote myself to tracking him down. He's still in the same house where we used to dine together, meals crafted as painstakingly as jewels, laughing with Baltimore social register-types. He drives the same car, same office space, check, check. I visit several fancy wine boutiques, specialty food stores, and watch the crowd departing after last week's performance of Don Giovanni at the opera house. I use high powered binoculars to track what time he leaves his office every day. He doesn't suspect a thing. He won't, until it's too late. Finally I manage to catch him alone, skirting along the edges of the art studios outside the Baltimore Summer Market. There's no one around, and his back is turned as he hangs up his phone. I'm utterly silent as I get behind him, injecting him immediately in the neck with a syringe-ful of etorphine hydrochloride. He's out so instantaneously that he doesn't make a sound. His eyes only widen slightly as he swings around. I have him. I have him. My power is absolute. And so is my rage. My rage will purify him. He will know so much pain. Pain is the only thing any of them understand, in the end. I am the only one who truly knows anything more. I am vengeance and power and life. This is my design.

Will finds himself on his knees, when he returns back to the world. He's shaking like a swimmer resurfacing from cold, unknown depths. His eyes and face are burn. He can feel the last vestiges of sick triumph fade from him. Creation, he thinks. That's the key here. That's how Hannibal is going to get found. But it will have to be soon. DuVall may not want Hannibal to die, but he's too blurred around the edges to be careful, now that he has his quarry. He might kill Hannibal by mistake. Will runs a hand over his sweaty forehead. There will be pain, he knows. Hannibal may not die, but he'll want to.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Hannibal revisits his childhood, but with significant differences. Sheldon DuVall arrives to dispense more divine justice.

Chapter Notes

YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER GET BACK TO THIS ONE, DIDJA???? WELL HERE I AM, TO WHUMP HANNIBAL SOME MORE.

Graphic depictions of torture (canon-typical basically) Translations at the end.

Hannibal doesn't know how long he's been wandering in the snow before he hears the distant shouts of the Russian soldiers. He turns to the girl beside him, urgently, and whispers "*Paleisk mano numylėtinį*" as he heads for cover. The voices are growing louder. Angry man, large men, men who were weakened by hunger but still strong, so strong. More than capable of dealing with two emaciated children half dead with cold and starvation. Hannibal and Mischa huddle together in the undergrowth, ice and filthy snow soaking into their already sodden, inadequate clothing.

"Я слышал, что мальчики были в этом районе" The biggest of the soldiers said, walking into the clearing. He is clearly the leader - well fed, and draped in furs over his severe uniform. Hannibal has passible Russian, and he understands the leader to be saying that he and his sister had been tracked here. But how? Why?

"Они, наверное, прячутся от нас, малышек." Responded one of his men, in an unpleasant mocking tone. "Они напуганы и думают, что мы их не найдем."

Hannibal struggles to control his breathing. They will be found, the man is right. They can't escape without making a sound. He squeezes Mischa's cold, thin hand, and tries to edge closer to shield her and warm her. He would never. Will never let anything happen to his dear sister, companion of his heart. She is his entire world, and a being of joy and light. There is no warmth in this world outside Mischa. No warmth, no love, nothing but skeletal trees and monsters. Like the monsters after him now.

For the Russian soldiers have changed. No longer men, their uniforms bulge and stretch to contain bloated segmented bodies. Their arms stretch and elongate, forming multiple joints which bend at impossible angles. Black fur covers their bodies, and venom drips from fangs under black faces corrupted by scores of small, black eyes. Hannibal has to clasp a hand over both his and Mischa's mouth to stop the screams that claw up from both their throats. What were these demons? What would they do to Mischa, when they found her - the sweet little girl with the soft, white skin and the blonde curls. What filth would they force her to endure?

Hannibal stepped from his hiding place, ignoring the frantic tugging at his sleeve, and out into the clearing.

"Here I am, Офицеры." He tried to keep his voice level, addressing them as officers with respect, despite the way their bodies are grotesquely elongating and branching. He stands with his head thrown back and his shoulders straight, a pitiable, brave little boy facing down horrors with his solemn, pinched face.

The soldiers began to laugh. Not human laughs, but the meaning carried through. The biggest one, the leader, approached him and tipped his chin up with one grotesquely long and multi-jointed black finger. "What we have here?" He asked in broken Lithuanian. "An orphan, lost in the storm?" The company laughed again. "Count Lecter, is it?" The captain continued in Russian. He scanned their surroundings.

"I'm the only one left," Hannibal says desperately, trying to keep an even tone of voice. "I lost my sister to starvation two days ago. I've been wandering alone, since." He notices his heartbeat start to flutter in his chest, but keeps his face mournful. He will not give Mischa away. He will be strong for her.

"Search the surrounding area," The captain barks at his men, and although inside Hannibal is howling, on the outside his expression is as cold as the winter that ate his youth.

//

The door to his basement swings open, at this point, and Hannibal finds himself in a slightly less frigid basement, trying to struggle back from the mind of his childhood self, and from that freezing forest that still lives at the very center of his heart. Sheldon DuVall is in the doorway, looking cheerful and deranged, carrying a covered metal tray. Hannibal summons

himself and wills his muscles to stop shivering and his teeth to stop chattering. He schools his expression into mild amusement, with an effort.

“Good morning, Sheldon,” he murmurs. “Or is it evening? So hard to tell without a window or watch.” Sheldon’s cheerfulness seems to waver for a moment, before returning.

“Doctor Lecter,” he beams, and approaches the shackled man with the tray in his hands. “It is, in fact, afternoon. You have been my guest for over two days now, and I must congratulate you on your mental stamina. Most of my other penitents were begging to be released by this point, lost deep inside psychosis.”

“Well, Sheldon,” Hannibal stretches as well as he can, aware of the pang of hunger and far worse thirst that are gripping his insides. “You would not have chosen me for this revenge if you didn’t think I was a worthy subject.”

Sheldon frowns. “You certainly have the makings of a true martyr and penitent, someone worthy of worshipping me and understanding the true power of my calling,” he says, “but we have to break you of this nasty self control and strength of will, first. It won’t do to have you retain your ability to resist my control before the end. The drugs don’t seem to be enough of a hobble - your internal strength is, I admit, impressive, so I’ve decided to add another....dimension to this becoming.”

DuVall removes the sheet and displays his grotesque toys to Hannibal, who rests his head back on the wall, trying to slow his heartrate, still elevated from his time in the past, and betray no surprise or emotion at the sight before him. It’s not the most creative array of torture equipment he’s seen - there are needles, a kettle boiling water, skin retractors, scalpels, mallets, and pliers. Most of the tools are for inflicting the most pain with minimal lasting damage. They are there to make him suffer. Let Sheldon try - Hannibal knows true suffering. This, he can withstand.

“Where to start?” Muses Duvall, pawing over his vile instruments. He picks up a needle and a match, and heats the needle over the flame until the tip is glowing. Then without ceremony, he reaches down and grabs Hannibal’s numb, shackled hands. Crouching down so that their eyes are level, Duvall jabs the burning needle under Hannibal’s thumbnail, shoving as hard as he can. He’s grinning, and rivulets of drool escape his mouth. His eyes roll in ecstasy. Hannibal bites his tongue until it bleeds, and lets out a slow breath, trying to retreat into his mind palace. But the drugs have stolen that from him as well. There is no escape. There is no

escape when DuVall uses the pliers to rip the nail off, no escape when he trickles boiling water down Hannibal's arms and legs, and certainly no escape when he uses the mallet to smash Hannibal's knee, shattering the patella in two. Rivulets of blood from his ruined fingers sting the blistering flesh on his arms. His knee is a sheet of acid, swollen and black and bloated like a spider. He's slowly starving to death, but will die first of thirst, if he gets no water within the next 24 hours. Hannibal sits motionless, his body splintered and ruined, and Sheldon delivers his last gift - another syringe to the neck, so that when he leaves, the shadows immediately return, along with the snow, the cold, and the sound of the soldiers beating the undergrowth, searching for his Mischa.

And finally, Hannibal screams.

// translations //

Paleisk mano numylétinĭ - Run, my darling

Я слышал, что мальчики были в этом районе - I heard the children were in the area

Они, наверное, прячутся от нас, малышек. - They're babies, they're probably hiding from us

Они напуганы и думают, что мы их не найдем - They're scared and think we won't find them

Офицеры - Officers.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Can Will save Hannibal in time?

Chapter Notes

I'm posting two chapters tonight since it's been so long, but I'm gonna try to update this regularly from now on, now that I'm back to it. I don't want this one to go unfinished!!

Will has been studying Sheldon DuVall's case file for almost 20 hours without break. He's read Dr. Lecter's notes, Alana Bloom's notes, the trial transcripts, the media coverage, and DuVall's own writings, and he desperately, desperately needs a break. A break from the continual, gibbering psychosis that fills his mind with DuVall's poison, and a break in the case. He doubts Hannibal has more than a day or two to live, and something ugly and reptilian rears its head inside of him at the thought of this sick, unworthy animal taking Hannibal's life. Hannibal is *his*. He shakes that thought away. Hannibal is *his* to bring to *justice*. He doesn't deserve to die at the hand of this third-rate monster. He won't. Will won't allow it. He hunches over a box containing information about DuVall's relatives and finances, and heaves a sigh, allowing his mind to wander. What is happening to Hannibal right now? Is he in pain?

Will knows that he's in pain. Will knows Sheldon DuVall, and his skin crawls. He hopes, he desperately hopes, that he will be able to find Hannibal before DuVall does any lasting damage. And he can't even think of the worse alternative. Hannibal dead. The idea makes his skin prickle. Hannibal, whatever else he may be, is Will's friend. More than that. Will has never felt so connected to another person, so accepted, so...cherished. But this train of thought is dangerous. He wants to rescue Hannibal because it will strengthen the man's attachment to him. It's a way to gain his trust and his gratitude. A manipulation, nothing more. It will give him a substantial upper hand, and card to hold. He just hopes Hannibal is in any shape to play the game when he finally does find him. God, he has to hurry.

Hannibal is in danger. He's in pain.

//

Ten hours later, Will catches a break. It comes while staring at a list of the man's finances and property holdings. He closes his eyes, and the pendulum swings in a slice of light.

It was my father who set me on this path. He had left the ascetic life of a Benedictine monk and married my whore of a mother, turning his back on God in order to perform his own, pale version of creation. Me. He taught me of the words of god and the ways of god, and instilled in me a powerful respect and awe of such a being who could control...everything. But most importantly, he could control life and death. That was what drew me, fascinated me, aroused me. When I became a doctor, I had thought to gain some measure of that control, that power, but the patients I lost were not sent to their deaths by my will, rather by God's will. The patients I saved I could mostly claim, but one is not powerful by being one half of the equation. I wanted power over both. Life and death. The two greatest gifts a God can bestow upon his creations. I gave my Father the death any son, any God, would have wanted for him. He rests there still, beneath the soil of my birth.

Will surfaced, gasping. He knew. He knew where Hannibal was.

He was in his car and on the way before he even thought about calling for backup, or calling jack.

//

Hannibal was in the forest again, and he was dying. He seemed to have lost most of the control over his motion, his limbs. He was covered in severe burns, his left leg was a burning lake of agony, and he couldn't move his right hand. But Mischa was in danger. The soldier creatures were rifling through the forest's undergrowth with clubs and sticks, their long, many-jointed arms pushing aside branches, their mouths dripping ichor onto dead leaves and withered trunks. They no longer seemed capable of speech, only clicks and buzzing noises, but they were getting so close -

One of them made a loud noise, and Hannibal heard Mischa's scream. He struggled as best he could, tied up with strong rope to the thick trunk of a tree, and crippled with pain and he was useless - so useless and weak. He had to save Mischa. If only he could think through this haze of pain. If only his legs worked, his arms.

Piercing shrieks rent the air as the creature yanked Mischa up by the hair and dragged her through the clearing. Hannibal fastened wide eyes on his little sister, trying to soothe her. He told her it would be ok, they would be ok. He told her he had a plan, that he would save her, that nothing bad would ever happen to her while he was there to watch over her, to protect her. He told her he loved her. He told her he loved her more than anything, that she was his heart, his reason for going on, so nothing would ever happen to her, because it was impossible, unthinkable, to live a life without her light in his heart.

He was still telling her these things when the soldiers dragged her away, screaming. He was still saying these things when the screaming stopped.

Then Hannibal stopped, too.

//

When Will arrived at Sheldon DuVall's childhood home, he unholstered his gun, and took a breath. DuVall was psychotic, but not stupid. He'd be holding Hannibal somewhere secure, like a basement or root cellar, but DuVall himself might be anywhere. His car wasn't in the driveway, but that didn't mean much. Will wondered again if he should have called Jack, but no, that wasn't an option. He has to be the one to save Hannibal, Hannibal is his. Jack was unpredictable - he might be angling to get Hannibal to face justice, as he claims, but it's not unlikely that he might just decide to let Hannibal die and pawn it off on DuVall - a nice, neat ending to the Chesapeake Ripper. And Will can't have that. He doesn't want Hannibal dead. He can't even let himself think that Hannibal might be dead already. The very idea makes him sick to his stomach for reasons he doesn't want to parse. He does a circuit around the house. If there's a basement or root cellar, it has no windows. There's nothing for it. He knocks on the door, weapon drawn.

Nothing. He knocks again, shouting "Mr. DuVall, it's the FBI, open up!"

Nothing.

So he kicks the door down.

Inside the old house smells rank and musty. Newspapers are stacked on every surface and rats scurry into dark corners. But there are signs of recent life. A plate in the sink, a mug on the table. He reaches for it - still warm. DuVall is here, or was recently. He points his gun forward, and makes his way into the next room.

The living room is just as filthy and cluttered as the kitchen, with one difference. There is a desiccated corpse sitting on the couch, nearly mummified. Dear old Daddy, Will supposes. The corpse is missing a few fingers, but has been gifted with new ones, bloody at the stump, shockingly red and wet against the brown, dusty skin. DuVall is up to his old games.

Will clears the upstairs, finding more mess but nothing alive or dead (not counting the silverfish and rats), and returns downstairs to hunt for a trapdoor that might lead him into the cellar.

He finds it underneath a rug in the dining room, shoving aside oak table and chairs to haul it up. The door makes a loud creaking sound when opened, and there goes Will's element of surprise, he supposes. At this point his mind is filled with panic and a low boiling rage. If this animal has hurt - killed - Hannibal, this time it won't take 9 shots for Will to put him down. He'll kill the man with his bare hands. He'll take note of every one of Hannibal's injuries, and make sure DuVall feels them all before he dies. He'll -

A noise from below interrupts him. It is a man's voice, not Hannibal, and he's screaming.

"You fucking coward," is what he screams, "you *can't* die yet! You *can't* be dead. I have *plans* for you!"

And Will jumps into the black.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Will faces off with DuVall to save Hannibal. Hannibal faces his old demons.

Chapter Notes

Comments give me life. Are you glad I picked up this story again??? Sorry for the short chapter this week, but I'll make it up to you with lots of H/C and vulnerable Hannibal being doted on....

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Hannibal was floating. He was nowhere. The snow was all-consuming, creeping into his bones and flesh like pale parasitic worms. He could no longer hear Mischa. He could no longer feel his heart beating. A great gout of arterial blood stained the snow of the clearing, and from somewhere far off, the hissing and clicking of dangerous creatures. There seemed to be some kind of argument, or disagreement among them, and the delicious smells of stew should have made his throat clench, but he couldn't move. He couldn't breathe. He could only exist in this never-ending purgatory of cold and hunger and pain, and for the first time in his young life, he began to pray for death.

Will descended into the cellar, and found it a labyrinth of clutter and hallways coated with grime. He tried to navigate by the sound of DuVall's enraged voice, but he couldn't stop thinking about what the man had said. He was too late. Hannibal was dead. His heart twisted painfully at the thought, but he shut that down. He shut down everything except the need, the burning desire, to take DuVall down. To punish him for his hubris and for thinking that he was worthy of removing this remarkable man from existence. He followed the shouting, getting lost once or twice by taking the wrong door, before he was finally stood in front of the door which echoed the angry words loudest. He took a deep breath, and kicked the door in.

DuVall turned on him with a snarl, turning his face to Will's. "Just who the fuck are you?" He growled?" But Will had no time for anything but Hannibal, lying on the floor, curled up facing the wall. Even from this distance he could tell the man was either dead or close to it. He was emaciated and covered in blood and filth, and Will couldn't see the rise and fall of his shoulders.

“Hannibal, so help me god,” Will’s voice broke. “I’m here, I found you. And if you die now, I’m going to hunt you to the afterlife and play the Sound of Music soundtrack on repeat for the rest of eternity.” He let out a wet chuckle. “Please be alive,” he begged, not keeping his eyes off the man in the corner, leveling his gun at the DuVall’s head as he asked “you said earlier that he was dead. Are you *sure*?”

“Fascinating,” DuVall murmured. “You’re Will Graham. Lecter betrayed us both, and yet here you are, trying to save his life. It seems he’s picked up an acolyte or two of his own.”

Will ignored this. “Is. He. Alive?” He repeated, cocking the gun and having the satisfaction of watching DuVall’s Adam’s apple bob as he swallowed.

He raised his arms in a placating gesture. “I may have been a little hasty, before,” he said. “He flatlined for a few seconds, but I was able to revive him. With a little water. I had forgotten to bring him water,” the man let out a giggle that prickled the skin on Will’s neck. “Lesser beings are so fragile and needy. My creations will outshine them all.” His face took on a far away look, as if cherishing the fantasy, and it was all the hesitation Will needed. He raised his sidearm, steadied himself, and fired a single bullet.

A single hole appeared as if by magic in the center of DuVall’s forehead. Blood began to spill down his face, and still he remained standing, even taking a step towards will, before he fell, heavily, and lay motionless at Will’s feet.

Will didn’t even waste time checking his pulse. He didn’t call for ERT. He ran to Hannibal’s prone body and noticed for the first time that the older man was shivering.

“Hey, hey, Hannibal, it’s ok, you’re safe,” Will babbled, unable to ignore the awesome wave of relief he felt at the rise and fall of the man’s chest, even though he was shocked by his condition. Hannibal turned his head, then, pupils like black holes, and mumbled in a language Will could not understand.

“Čia tau nėra saugu.” He said, his voice rough with disuse and dehydration. God, he was covered in blood and sweat. Will’s fists clenched. What had DuVall done?

Hannibal was growing more agitated. “Kareiviai yra arti. Jiems nerūpi valgyti vaikus ir jiems nebus svarbu.” He growled, and then seemed to retain a moment of near lucidity. “I am in a weakened state. I couldn’t possibly walk. My knee is broken and badly infected. You should run. Save yourselves.” And then he said something that Will would never forget.

“They are always hungry.”

//

Despite Hannibal’s pleas, Will had no intention of leaving him in this state. He called an ambulance, called Jack to fill him in, and then grudgingly called Alana, who wept in relief. He spared her the details of what Hannibal had gone through - and was still going through. He didn’t know how long the cocktail would last, but Hannibal had resumed crouching against the wall. He muttered in that same language, and spent his time gripped by a horrible delusion - Will could tell the extent of the horror when all at once Hannibal let out an unearthly howl, threw the plate of apples and cheese Will had managed to find, and then doubled up and vomited between his knees - painful, wracking sounds mixed with sobs. Will rubbed his back until the ambulance arrived.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

Čia tau nėra saugu.: It is not safe for you here

Kareiviai yra arti. Jiems nerūpi valgyti vaikus ir jiems nebus svarbu.: The soldiers are close. They don't care about eating children, and they won't care about eating you.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

THE BEGINNING OF RECOVERY

Chapter Notes

Comments are food

On the way to the hospital, Hannibal curls into himself, making his broken body as small as possible, and stares, unblinking, at the landscape passing by. Will doesn't know what he's actually seeing, but the man's minute flinches and the tears that stream down his pale face convince him that he's probably better off knowing. He wonders if it's solely a hallucination drawn from fantasy, or if he is remembering some trauma from his past. He remembers the look on Hannibal's face when he mentioned his sister, and his heart twists in his chest. Hannibal has reverted to childhood, speaking in his mother tongue, whimpering in fear, and at one point, when a four-wheeler blasts by, he grips Will's sleeve, turning those wide, impossibly dark eyes on him.

At the hospital, Hannibal was whisked away for tests, and Will was left with the unwelcome task of waiting around for news and hoping that Jack didn't show up to debrief him. He had no space in his mind for anything except Hannibal, and Jack would want a play-by-play of the shooting at the very least. Who knows - maybe Jack would respect his need to decompress for once. The waiting room remained surprisingly empty.

After an agonizing hour during which time Will tried and failed to read an issue of the New Yorker six times, a short, stout Indian woman approached him and asked him if he was Doctor Lecter's emergency contact. Will raised his eyebrows.

"I guess I am," he shrugged. "He doesn't have any family left." The doctor, who had introduced herself as Hannibal's attending surgeon Dr. Kassamali, had a light, pleasant accent, but a reserved, even stern demeanor.

“Well, your friend was in quite a state when he arrived,” she chided. “Patella broken in two, severe dehydration, second and a few isolated third degree burns on his arms and legs, fingernails removed, and it seems,” she had to stop here to cough, “it seems that somebody has removed strips of his skin from his back and buttocks - not large strips,” she hastened to add, taking Will’s aghast face, “the purpose seems to have been to cause pain and nothing else.” She sighed. “We ran a tox screen and he maxed out the charts for various hallucinogens, hypnotics, and stimulants. It’s a wonder that he doesn’t have brain damage, but we’ll have to check longer term for any adverse effects. That man has been put through the wringer.” She pursed her lips. “There’s no exact way of knowing when the effects of the drug cocktail will wear off, because we don’t know when he was given a dose last, but my best guess is 12-18 hours.” She paused at this, and her eyes flickered down to his. “I hope you’re a good friend of his, Mr. Graham,” she said finally, “because he’s going to need you to overcome this. One cannot even guess at the extent of trauma that poor man has suffered, not to mention the physical agony. He will be in surgery to repair his knee for about six hours, and then you may see him.” She turned to leave, and then stopped. “Nobody deserves what was done to him, Mr. Graham,” she said softly, “and it will be difficult to help him back to the man he was, but be patient, and show him as much love and understanding as you have in you to give.”

The door swung shut behind her, and Will blinked back tears.

//

Will drove home on autopilot to shower and change before his return to the hospital. He doesn’t want Hannibal waking up to the bland, antiseptic smells of illness as well as his own lingering scent of his night sweats and maligned aftershave. He is startled out of the reverie he has fallen into trying to pick a nice shirt that isn’t plaid, by a knock on the door. Jack, he thinks, irritably. He’s not about to let Jack delay him from being the first thing Hannibal sees when he wakes up.

But it’s not Jack, it’s Freddie Lounds, and his irritation skyrockets at the sight of her. He doesn’t invite her in, preferring to lean against the porch railing and watch as she is inundated by dogs.

“Will Graham,” she says brightly, “You’ll never believe what a little birdie told me today about you and your former psychiatrist. The one you proclaimed was The Chesapeake Ripper, in case your memory needs refreshing.”

“It doesn’t,” Will answered shortly, “and I’m unlikely to believe anything you tell me whatsoever.” Freddie, aggravatingly enough, has made friends with the pack (though Winston keeps his distance), and she sits on the porch swing, looking at home.

“It seems that our kidnapped doctor-slash-favorite serial killing cannibal was saved this morning in the nick of time. A few minutes either way, and it would have been good night, sweet cannibal.”

Will scoffs. “How many times do I have to remind you that I was wrong about him, Freddie. I had encephalitis - my brain was on fire. And then afterwards, I was locked up in a mental institution, dealing with severe trauma. I wasn’t thinking straight.”

Freddie cocks her head at this. “Maybe, maybe not,” she muses. “But either way, imagine my surprise when I learned who rescued him. Quite a turnabout from trying to have him killed, I would say.” She smiles up at him. “Maybe some murderers are worth saving - eh, Will?”

“End of discussion,” Will bites out, digging his fingernails into his palms. “Now please get off of my property.”

Freddie eases herself up, and looks down at Will. She looks pensive, all of a sudden, and it may be the most genuine expression he has ever seen cross her face. He wonders fleetingly if she knows that she’s a psychopath, and then decides that she probably doesn’t care either way. “Will,” she begins slowly, “I don’t know what the situation is between you and Lecter, but from an outside perspective it all looks pretty ominous, if not to say downright alarming. You’re not actually falling for his act, are you? Because a) I would have pegged you as smarter than that, and b) that seems like a really good way for people to end up dead.”

With that, she turned on her heel and headed to her car, which departed in a squeal of rubber. Will sat for a few long silent moments after she left, running things over and over in his mind. Was he being manipulated again? Could he even trust his feelings? He wanted Hannibal to be put away, that was no less true now, but at the same time...he almost couldn’t bear the thought of his graceful, erudite monster being caged underground, unable to speak or touch except through a thick wall of bulletproof glass. Hannibal was dangerous, he should be apprehended. But Will wasn’t sure what he actually wanted anymore. What he really wanted was to pick up some chicken soup from the deli in Baltimore that Hannibal had pointed out to

him once as having exceptional local fare, and head to the hospital so that he could see for himself what sort of state Hannibal was in. And if he wasn't ok, Will wanted to help. He wanted to drag him back from whatever abyss he was mired in, so that he could see his friend looking out from behind his own eyes again. His thoughts were a jumble of contradictions.

He ended up picking up the soup anyways, and told himself he would figure it out later.

//

Back at the hospital, he waited for a good while before being shown into the post-surgery ward. Sure enough, his eyes fastened on a familiar head of honey wheat hair in a far bed. He moved closer. The hair was rumpled and greasy, not the usual gelled neat sweep. Hannibal had his head turned to the wall as Will approached, but he rolled over as he heard the table being wheeled beside his bed, and the soup container being unloaded. He looked terrible. Bloodshot eyes stared out of dark sockets, showing too much of the whites. His lips were chapped and peeling, and he seemed in a daze, doddering his head around like an old man, biting his lip in pain at every movement.

He was the first one to break the silence. "Hello, Will," he rasped out, his accent so thick that it was nearly incomprehensible. "Are you real?"

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Short chapter again. Angst. Pain. But we're getting to the H/C I promise. Translations at the end.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will's heart jolts in his chest. "I'm real, Hannibal," he murmurs. "I'm here. The drugs are still in your system, but this hospital room, me, we're all real. You're safe."

Hannibal's eyes are huge and filled with water. "I'm not safe," he says, his voice breaking. "Everyone I've ever...cared about has been taken from me. You're not safe with me."

Will's chest feels tight. "I'm the ONLY one safe around you, Hannibal," He whispers fiercely. "I killed that animal who was hurting you. I will kill *anyone* who tries to harm you. I'll rip them apart with my bare hands. You are mine, do you understand? You see me. You know me. And I know you. We are stronger together, you and I."

At this Hannibal turns his back on Will. *Turėtų būti laimė, kad atokiau nuo manęs. Aš negaliu save taip suvaldyti. Nežinau, ar dar kada pavyks susivaldyti.* He mumbles into the wall and the window. "Go, Will. I couldn't stand losing you too."

Will's chest is on fire. He's never seen Hannibal this vulnerable, and it hurts, somewhere deep down. He wants his monster back. He wants Hannibal to preen and smile his smug smile and brush his gentle, dangerous hands up the small of his back.

"I don't think you heard me, Hannibal," he says harshly. "I can take care of myself. You of all people should know that. You're not going to lose me, and I'm. Not. Going. Anywhere." And then, mindful of the bandages which seem to cover Hannibal's entire body, he cradles the man's face in his hands. "You are the strongest person I've ever met, And I see you. I see you

and I lo...I care about you too. Enough so that when you get out of here, I will take care of you. I *will* see you better, Hannibal. I will do whatever it takes.

In some ways, Will can't believe the words that are coming out of his mouth. His previous plan has turned to ashes from the moment he saw Hannibal curled up on the floor, shivering, crying over his lost sister. Maybe, he thinks, some monsters aren't *meant* to be caged. Certainly not *his* monster. He realizes that he's thought of Hannibal as his for a long time now. His beautiful, damaged monster, who carries so much pain inside, and now outside. He refuses to let anything else happen to this man he loves.

He....loves?

Will shoves that thought aside for a moment. Hannibal is shaking again, and when Will gently turns him over, he sees that the older man is weeping. He weeps like an abused child. Silent, heavy tears spill over his cheeks and down to his collar bones.

"They took her from me again," Hannibal weeps. "I was too weak. Too weak to save her. They killed her and." He stops, shudders. "I was so hungry, and I told myself I didn't know. I told myself it was anything else, but I knew. Deep down, I knew." He looks up at Will with pleading eyes. "I was never going to be normal," he says, "but how can a man survive such a thing?"

"You weren't a man," Will says vehemently. "You were a child. A boy. What was done to you was horrific. Beyond the bounds of humanity. You weren't weak, Hannibal. You survived it. And you survived this. And you can survive anything. Together, we can survive anything."

At that moment, Hannibal's nostrils quivered. Freddie Lounds. He could smell Freddie Lounds on Will. A live Freddie Lounds. He could picture so clearly, Will's beautiful face as he presented Hannibal the meat. His sly references to long pig, his obvious pleasure at sharing something beautiful. Hannibal's heart feels like it stops in his chest. Betrayal. Betrayal after loss after betrayal. He tries to school his face not to twist in agony. His body is on fire. His mind is on fire. His heart is melting in his chest. *Will*, he thinks. If it had been any other time he would almost have been impressed at how well Will is playing the game. But as of now, the shadows are creeping in again. He can smell the stew cooking. Everything is getting dark and cold.

Hannibal looked at him, tears still clinging to his pale lashes. “I don’t know, Will,” he says finally. “I’m not sure I can survive you.”

Chapter End Notes

Turėtų būti laikytis atokiau nuo manęs. Aš negaliu savęs taip suvaldyti. Nežinau, ar dar kada pavyks susivaldyti: You should stay away from me. I can't control myself like this. I don't know if I'll ever be able to control myself again.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal talk - or rather, Will talks and Hannibal warns him obliquely

Chapter Notes

Added a whole section to this short-ass chapter, leading up to a confrontation and maybe, FINALLY, some COMFORT, after all the hurt.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will feels his heart jolt in his chest at this confession, and at the way which Hannibal still refuses to hold his head up and look him in the eye. The older man is staring out the window again, watching rain cascade sideways across the frosted glass.

“I brought you soup,” Will says, feeling stupid, and pushes the container forwards towards Hannibal, who immediately stiffens and clutches his arms to his sides. Will doesn’t understand the response, but he gently uncovers the soup and hopes that the savory aroma will tempt Hannibal to eat something. It’s only been days, but he looks so thin - wasted away, as if his grief is a parasite inside of him consuming him utterly.

Hannibal relaxes, bit by bit, enough to turn and check the label on the soup container. “You went to the B&D Deli?” He asks, sounding almost normal, and Will grins with the relief of it.

“You showed it to me once,” he reminds Hannibal, remembering the fragrant warm interior, the smell of rosemary and kalamata olives, of honey and dates. “I thought - you know - hospital food wouldn’t dare come anywhere near you, so might as well...” he trails off, looking at the expression on Hannibal’s face. The older man is looking at him with a gaze so utterly black, so completely devoid of any recognizable emotion, that Will is momentarily frightened that he’s had a psychotic break. But the moment is over in a shuttering of eyelids, and Hannibal stares back down at the chicken soup.

“I brought you chicken soup once, as well,” he murmurs into the steam. “But I didn’t understand at the time, what I was...” he trails off. “You understand, though,” he says with more confidence. “You know exactly what you’re doing, and why. You saved me” - he pierces Will with a narrow glance. “From torture and death.”

Then he puts his utensils down, and quiets again. Will looks up at him.

“It looks like I did,” he murmurs softly, and watches a shiver run down Hannibal’s spine. “And before you bring it up again, yes, I know exactly what I’m doing. My questions aren’t so prosaic. My questions run more to the why of things.”

Hannibal sips his soup. “I thought I knew the why,” he whispered into his cup. “I found myself to be quite mistaken. Make sure, Will, that you have a firm grasp on what’s important, before you take a step that you cannot take back. I can honestly say that I would forgive you almost everything - even saving my life for me to relive her death over and over in my waking nightmares, but there are some things I will not and cannot bear to have forced on me once again.”

Hannibal is out of breath from this short declaration, and his hands are shaking, but he’s drunk some of the soup, and despite his quiet desperation, Will feels satisfied.

“Do you understand, Will?” Hannibal’s voice in that moment is an inhuman thing, and Will flinches from the suddenness of its struggling alien soundscape.

And Will realizes that he doesn’t understand. He has no idea at all. He had thought that while perhaps not on the same chapter, Hannibal and he were at least reading from the same book, but Hannibal’s sudden anger flies at him like a blizzard and utterly blinds him. And it is terrifying.

He’s made a decision, hasn’t he? (Hasn’t he?) Is that what this is about? Not stepping away from Hannibal now that he’s stepped so far towards him? But...the chill in those eyes. No, it’s not just about that, if that’s even at the root of it all. It’s about the things that make Hannibal scream in the night, flinch from a touch, and hide himself carefully away in his fairytale walled castle. That’s what this is about. And Will has no idea what to do next.

//

Will visits Hannibal in the hospital every day. The drugs are out of his system, but he remains cold and distant. Will can't tell if this is shame for his weakness, or if Will has somehow hurt Hannibal. Neither of these are acceptable, but he can't figure out how to address the issue, much less fix things. He is alternating between tender and frustrated. The bandages come off of Hannibal's hands and arms, and Will feels tears pool in his eyes at the scarred, red skin, the raw places Hannibal's neatly trimmed fingernails used to be.

Physical therapy is worse. Hannibal is in pain - it's not obvious to anyone but Will, but at one point Hannibal falls to one knee and then it's obvious to everybody. He can feel the pity and sympathy radiating out from the nurses and other patients, and he can feel Hannibal's rage at his weakness. His shame. He gets back up, straight backed, and continues on, held head high.

Oh, Hannibal. You don't always need to be so strong. I'm here. I will support you.

But Hannibal shoots him a disdainful look, and turns to walk back to his bed. His knee is screaming, but all he does is grit his teeth and let out a breath. If Will is going to play this game, Hannibal cannot show weakness. No matter how alone he feels. No matter how bereft of his affection and love of this extraordinary man. All his plans are turning to ashes. If Sheldon DuVall were here, he would make him suffer and suffer. Or perhaps he would allow himself to sink into atrophy and freeze to death in the frigid winter of his own mind.

Will turns his head away briefly to hide his hurt. He knows that Hannibal will take a long time to recover from his trauma, but he had thought he could help him through this time. Be his anchor. His paddle. Just as Hannibal was supposed to be his, what feels like a lifetime ago. A brief spike of grief hits just under Will's chest, but it is devoid now of any real rage or blame. He knows that he's being torn in two between two immutable forces - Hannibal's character and Jack's impotent rage, but that rage feels very far away from him at this moment, watching Hannibal clutch at the door to his room.

Then a thought occurred to him. Maybe Hannibal doesn't trust anchors or paddles. Maybe that's why he made such disastrous paddle himself, because the concept was as foreign to him as any genuine act of selflessness would be.

Will knows that Hannibal has never had anyone to rely on in his life, past the point of earliest childhood. Abandonment and trauma were all he knew, so he built armor around himself that could bend but never break and Will... Will has been planning on betraying him for months now. He's already betrayed him - Freddie is still alive. Her very survival, and the lies that tripped off Will's silver tongue were a betrayal.

His eyes widen. Could Hannibal possibly know?? How could he know? And more importantly, how could Will convince him that he is no longer playing that game. That, at least, is not a lie. Freddie might be alive and well, but Will's desire for revenge has died a quiet, dreamless death, He can't lie to himself or Hannibal anymore.

This is no longer about capturing Hannibal, it's not about caging him, or killing him. It's about healing him. It's about... knowing him. Seeing him. Being together. Trying to reach through to the frightened child behind those walls. Finally, Will can bring himself to say the words. This beautiful, extraordinary man who sees so much and accepts Will as he is, darkness and all. He loves him. Shit. He loves him with all his heart. And Hannibal no longer trusts him. Or himself. Or anyone. He's mired deep within the redoubled trauma that his torturer has implanted deep within, and he's drowning, alone.

//

How can Will fix this?

Chapter End Notes

USE YOUR WORDS, HANNERS

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Buhbye Freddie it's been real

Chapter Notes

Dark! Will time. Y'all ready?

When Will arrived home after making sure a silent Hannibal was securely in bed, Freddie Lounds was on his property again. Freddie fucking Lounds. How he hated her, with her cow's tongue always hanging out of her mouth, ready to spread disease, to sew her vile plague of lies. He pulls up to her and gets out, keeping his fisted hands in his pockets.

“So what is this now?” Freddie asks lightly, “cannibal home care nursing? Serial killer group therapy?”

Will tenses. “Why are you here, Freddie,” he asks as calmly as he can.

“Little birdie told me that you’ve been visiting him every day,” Freddie tosses her long brassy curls. “Bringing him gourmet get-well food. Is that love I smell in the air? Or psychosis?” She bites down on the end of the word, and Will snaps. Will’s love is still a raw, open wound, and for Freddie to go poking her sticky fingers into it without care for anything but her own sick thirst for power...

His hand is gripping her by the base of her skull. His other hand securely wrapped around her mouth and nose. He can feel her body whipsawing back and forth, and the screams that try to bubble their way up but are blocked by the force of him. His heart rate is very slow. His brain is calm and clear. Gradually, he exerts more pressure with his elbows, pressing on the sides of her neck, blocking the flow of blood to her brain.

Eventually, her body goes limp and sags to the floor. Will's mind is soaring, euphoric. His limbs shake with power. He almost wishes there were blood, so he could taste it. So he could bring a mouthful to Hannibal and share it with him. Hannibal.

Hannibal. He is the question and the answer both. Will grasps Freddie's corpse underneath the arms and begins to drag her to his workshop. He has a full night of work ahead of him, a labor of love, let's call it, so that he can show Hannibal that his trust, his love, is not misplaced. That Will is his, and always has been. He can almost feel their hearts thrumming together as he lays out a row of instruments, and sinks one into flesh that is already growing cold.

//

Jack Crawford stands with his hands buried deep within his pockets, taking in the scene before him. He's been assured that this corpse is, indeed, Freddie Lounds, although what remains of her is not recognizable. Her body is more or less intact, posed nude like a dancer, with one leg draped over a tree branch, back arched, leg pointed, arm extended. The tree almost seems to cradle her prone form. Her arm points at the ground, where her viscera has been carefully laid beneath her, her open chest cavity having rained rills of blood down her gracefully extended body until it seems shaded, deliberately painted in bars of rusty brown.

Her heart is missing. Her tongue has been cut out. Her eyes have been sewn shut.

Where her heart had been, another heart has been planted in her chest cavity. Jack doesn't know whose heart it is, but he knows whose work this screams into his already screaming brain. This is the ripper. This is classic ripper. But.

But.

Hannibal has been checked on, and his doctors assured Jack that there was no physically possible way for him to have left the building, much less wreaked the havoc found here. Will has answered his phone groggily and promised to show up, so he was in bed in Wolf Trap. Will Graham. Jack's heart sinks a little lower. He wasn't capable. Jack was so sure he wasn't capable. He wanted revenge as much as Jack did. It was his goddamn plan, to lure Hannibal in. He couldn't be involved in this...sick homage.

Will's car pulls up just at that moment, and the man himself steps out, jaw dropping.

"Who...Jack, is that Freddie Lounds?" He certainly seems shaken. "Christ, I was just talking to her yesterday. She was trying to pump me for information about Hannibal's medical state. Told her to fuck right off."

"When was this?" Jack snaps, opening up his notepad.

"I dunno, Jack, when I got home? After dark? I didn't exactly check my watch, and our conversation was all of a minute long." Will fell silent. "I guess she finally pissed off the wrong serial killer, huh?" He murmured, more to himself, and Jack shoots him a sharp look.

"Will, this is the Ripper," Jack barks it.

Will makes a face. "How could it be, Jack?" He shoots back. "And besides...I'm just...not seeing it. No organ removal, the surgical cuts aren't up to his standard, and this feels too personal for the Ripper."

"Her heart is missing," Jack grinds out.

"Then whose is that?" Will jerks a finger towards the organ in her chest. "That might help to know? But when was the last time the Ripper did that, Jack? Removed an organ and replaced it with another? That's...." Will fell silent, pondering. "That's Sheldon DuVall's MO," he began slowly. "Jack - do you think this may be a copycat?"

//

When Will arrived at the hospital that evening, he was fairly thrumming with energy. He had no idea - zero - how he was going to explain himself to Hannibal, or what he'd done, or what he had been planning to do, but none of that mattered. What mattered were the crime scene

photographs carefully tucked under his jacket, and the thundering of his heart in his chest. He wanted Hannibal to be proud of him - of his gift to him.

Hannibal regarded him silently as he made his way to the chair next to his bed. He was looking stronger, fitter, at least physically, although still hobbled by his knee, but his face was as regal and distant as ever.

The next few minutes passed like a dream.

“A body has been found,” Will breathes, looking straight into Hannibal’s eyes. Hannibal’s lips are pursed, his gaze suspicious.

“They’re sure it’s Freddie Lounds,” Will says, and opens his jacket to retrieve the photographs, which he lays in front of Hannibal one by one.

Hannibal says nothing - just stares.

“The theory is that her...disappearance...and apparent death, before now, was part of a trap she was laying in order to lure someone out.” Will’s voice is a whisper now. “But I don’t think that plan worked out for her. For anyone.” He placed a hand on Hannibal’s wrist, and Hannibal didn’t move. “I don’t think that plan took into account all of the...potential variables. All of the personalities involved.”

Hannibal was still staring at the photos, but now his head turned slowly- so slowly - towards Will. There were tears standing out in his eyes. He slowly lifted a hand, and placed it on top of Will’s.

“Darling boy,” his voice creaked, as if long unused. “I’m so thankful that I won’t have to kill you after all.”

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Oh my holy goodness I'm back to this fic. Short chapter, sorry, but it's gonna take time to get Hannibal out of the hospital into Will's care. At least we've got some actual adult communication going on!

Will's heart leaps, pounding painfully in his ribcage as he stares at his shattered friend.

"So," he begins, and then his hand reaches out blindly to rest gently on top of Hannibal's. "So," he tries again, and is rewarded by a faint smile that reaches Hannibal's eyes.

"So," Hannibal says, running his ruined thumb up and over Will's knuckles. "You decided on a better course of action." It's as if he's discussing the weather, were it not for his finger running so gently along Will's own. Will coughs.

"The previous plan," he marshalls his thoughts. "It didn't take into account certain..eventualities." He squares his jaw.

"Eventualities?" Hannibal knows. Of course he knows, the bastard. He just wants Will to say it out loud. To have some satisfaction after weeks of pain. Will can't deny him that. At this point, Will isn't sure he can deny him anything.

"My...feelings towards you have...shifted." He finally manages, grasping Hannibal's hand a little tighter, watching a minute wince cross the doctor's face before he relaxes his grasp. "I've decided that there are more possibilities with you in my life than with you in a cage," he forces out. "I *want* you in my life. With all that entails." He heaves a breath. "Will you let me in, Hannibal?" He asks, his own voice sounding ragged, used. "Will you let me in there with you, to share yourself? Your pain? Your anger?" He breathes. "Your radiance?"

Hannibal twitches. “My radiance,” he repeats, his voice sounding stilted. “Somewhat dimmed, as of late,” he motions to his hospital bed, his bindings, the cocoon of cotton and stabilizers that keep his leg in place. Will shakes his head.

“It doesn’t matter,” Will murmurs. “It will all return in the end. You will get back to the man you were before all of this. You *will*. And I’ll be here, Hannibal. I’ll be here to help you get him back, because...because I can’t think of a life without you in it.”

Hannibal makes a noise, low in his throat, and Will is astonished to see tears budding in his open eyes. Those eyes, wine and honey, seek out his own, and the tears fall, noiseless like shimmering light, down his handsome, wracked face.

“I,” he begins, “I’m not good at sharing these parts of myself, Will.” The tears diminish, but they don’t entirely stop. “I haven’t opened myself up in this way since I was a child.” He sighs, and draws will closer to him, so that the smaller man is bent over the bars of his hospital bed. “It won’t be easy for me,” Hannibal says, “especially given recent...events, but I will try, for you. For you, Will, I will try.”

Will runs a gentle hand through Hannibal’s hair, marveling at how silky it still is after weeks of hospital sponge baths. The older man arches slightly into his touch, his eyes falling lidded. “That’s all I want, Hannibal,” he whispers. “Just you. Just you and who you are.”

Hannibal shifts so that Will’s hand is cupping his cheek. “It won’t be easy for you either,” he says, sounding slightly mournful. “I will try to keep my control on a leash, not to endanger you for things that you haven’t done, but Will.” He stops and breathes. “I’m not sure you understand the depths of anger and violence that dwell within me. What I show the world,” he breathes. “My art. That is only a small fraction of what I feel.”

Will strokes down one sharp cheekbone. “I know,” he murmurs into his cannibal’s hair. “I’ve always known. And I’ll take it all. I want it all. I want to *know* you.”

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!